

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Speaker, I will comply with your recommendation and go on with my remarks.

Considering this much too high unemployment rate, the uncontrolled inflation, the destitution, poverty and worry of those who still have a job, I feel this is not the right time for members of Parliament to grant themselves such a substantial increase at one fell swoop. When a third of our fellow Canadians are enduring hardships, with little hope of an improvement in their situation under the present system, they are justified in being dissatisfied.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, two or three letters from my constituents. I could quote from hundreds of that kind. Here is one:

Mr. Minister,

The writer is not addressing the Prime Minister, or any minister. She just calls me "minister".

This is to ask you to peruse the notice of acceptance I received from the Quebec Pension Plan.

I am writing you because I have faith in your ability and in your efficiency within the government. This is why I would ask you to plead on my behalf with the provincial government so that they review the amount of the widow's pension they want to allow me.

Just a few weeks ago, her husband was killed in an accident and she received a notice to the effect that the Quebec Pension Board will pay her a monthly pension. The notice reads as follows:

We are pleased...

They are tickled pink—

... to inform you that the Board has approved the application for benefits which you have made. Payments will begin at the under-mentioned date.

This is the glorious amount of \$43.52 a month!

They are tickled pink indeed to inform the widow that she will be the recipient of this amount. She has a dependent crippled daughter. The widow will receive \$43.52 a month for the winter of her years.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this lady has cause for concern. I think that she has grounds not to be satisfied with the increase in salary that we are about to vote for ourselves.

Here is another letter that reads as follows:

This is to ask you to help us. I appeal to you because you inspire confidence and I also know that you are very influential.

Do you think it possible to live decently on a meagre pension of \$160 per month, which is the amount that I have been receiving as welfare until now, but the officer in the La Sarre office advised me that from now on I shall receive only \$130 a month; I do not see how we shall be able to make it, as with this amount we must pay food, clothing, school and municipal taxes, electricity, everything; this is nonsense, do you not agree?

My husband is handicapped, I am sick myself, we must take a great deal of drugs the cost of which is prohibitive, and we cannot possibly pay taxes on our house.

This family has to live on \$130 a month and thousands of other families are in the same predicament, not only in my own constituency but all across Canada. This situation is not exclusive to the province of Quebec. One merely has to read the proceedings of the Senate Com-

Senate and House of Commons Act

mittee on Poverty and the briefs submitted to them to know of the extent of misery everywhere in Canada. While we do nothing to stop the sufferings of people who did nothing to deserve it, we are considering a raise in our own salaries.

The importance of our representation here in this House certainly justifies an adequate salary. Our expenses run higher than those of the head of any industrial establishment, or of any store manager, or of any public servant because we have to fulfil so many requests from our constituents. But to make everybody understand that is hard enough and I believe that before thinking about the administrators we should think about the administered. There is one thing however the government should have considered in drafting the bill before us, namely to facilitate better contacts between members, electors and departments. That is why the right hon. Prime Minister should have provided for the services of a secretariat in every constituency. People say that we can afford it with our expense allowance. Yet everybody knows that is not the only expense a member has to make.

In a riding as large as mine—there are others also that are very large—at least three offices or more should be opened to give satisfaction to all my electors.

The Abitibi constituency is larger than any other, except that of the Northwest Territories! In fact, it is bigger than the four Maritime provinces together and greater than France.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, needless to say that the \$6,000 granted for expenses or the \$8,850 granted to meet the needs of two or three offices in a constituency like that one, where one has to travel through the whole of New Quebec in order to visit remote communities, are absolutely inadequate.

The establishment in every constituency, like in the province of Quebec, of a well-equipped secretariat to meet the electors' requests, should have been provided for. Every weekend many people call on me or many others write to me during the week to ask me to plead their case with certain departments. Some people tell me that after writing four times, they have received no reply.

● (8:40 p.m.)

Therefore, if we had a well organized office, staffed with people in a position to contact the electors, the public servants and the departments during the week, with the help of the member, this would render a service not to the member but to the electors. The bill should have provided for the establishment of the services required.

Secondly, those who call on their member here are astonished to see in what conditions he must work. There is not a single civil servant, even among those earning only \$6,000 per annum who would accept working in the conditions imposed on the member.

Imagine that the member who gets a phone call from an elector or must communicate with some department while two typewriters are running close by. Can the